



# *Press Release*



## **WESTERN REGIONAL MEDICAL COMMAND**

Strategic Communication Department  
Joint Base Lewis-McChord, WA 98433  
(253) 967-8153 or (253) 967-8110  
Fax (253) 966-1352

**FOR RELEASE**

**Point of Contact: Sharon Ayala  
(253) 967-8027 or 967-8110**

Feb. 22, 2012

### **All 14 Soldiers notified of Walter Reed results**

**Western Regional Medical Command, Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash.** --- Today, the remaining six Soldiers were notified of the results of their behavioral health reevaluations that were conducted at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Washington, DC. The notification process, which began yesterday at Madigan Army Medical Center (MAMC) was completed earlier this afternoon.

Col. Rebecca Porter, Chief, Behavioral Health, Office of the U.S. Army Surgeon General, explained the reevaluation with each of the Soldiers and discussed the options available to them. The appointments focused on open discussions between Porter and each patient, where she reaffirmed Army Medicine's commitment to their healthcare needs.

The results of the reevaluations are summarized as follows: Of the original group of 14 Soldiers who requested a reevaluation, the original PTSD diagnoses for six of them were reconfirmed by the subsequent reevaluation at Walter Reed. The original PTSD diagnoses for six other Soldiers were re-diagnosed as behavioral conditions other than PTSD. The remaining two Soldiers who were never diagnosed with PTSD were reevaluated and determined to have behavioral health conditions other than PTSD. All 14 Soldiers will be provided with the opportunity to reengage in the Medical Evaluation Board (MEB) process.

"Our goal is to first provide an accurate medical diagnosis," Porter said. "When any of our providers are assessing the health of our Soldiers, their practice is guided by evidence-based interventions that are widely used by medical providers throughout the United States, and that are individualized to the patient's specific condition. The diagnostic process is intentionally separate from the compensation

determination process, because our role is to provide an accurate and complete diagnosis based on the needs of each patient.”

In response to the concerns surrounding these 14 cases at MAMC, the U.S. Army Surgeon General, Lt. Gen. Patricia Horoho, has suspended forensic evaluations in connection with MEBs until formalized guidelines can be published.

Now that each Soldier has been notified in person of his/her reevaluation results, the Command’s intent is to ensure that all Soldiers receive appropriate guidance as to the next steps. There are specified appeals processes in place, and the Western Regional Medical Command will facilitate Soldiers accessing these processes.

According to Maj. Gen. Philip Volpe, Commanding General, Western Regional Medical Command, “The results of these 14 cases suggest that some degree of variance was introduced into the diagnostic process by the use of forensically-trained clinicians. We have a responsibility to identify the cause of variance, eliminate diagnostic variance, and standardize our processes across all of Army Medicine.”

Madigan was the only Army medical facility that routinely used a forensic psychiatry service in the MEB evaluation process. When the Army was made aware of potential variations occurring in the process at MAMC, an extensive review and re-evaluations followed. The Army is making improvements in its current system to standardize behavioral health evaluations in the MEB process to ensure such isolated practices do not introduce variance into the diagnostic process.

“The Army has the best interest of the Soldier in mind and views such practice variations as unacceptable. Nothing is more important to the Command team and me than working this issue to ground and keeping the Soldier’s best interest at heart, always,” Volpe said.

The Point of Contact for this information is Ms. Sharon Ayala, Western Regional Medical Command, Strategic Communications and Executive Services, (253) 967-8027/967-8110.